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GRAPEVINE

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1994

GRAPEVINE BR

First Published in 1994 by
Cornerhouse Publications
70 Oxford Street
Manchester, England M1 5NH
061 237 9662

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ISBN 0 948797 13 4 Cloth
ISBN 0 948797 12 2 Paper

First edition

Design: Joseph Guglietti, New York
Transcription and text preparation:
Helburn & Associates, New York
Artwork production: Cornerhouse
Reprographics: Leeds Photo Litho
Printing: Jackson Wilson, Leeds
Printed in tritone on Skyesilk Imperial

GRAPEVINE

photographs by **SUSAN LIPPER**

CORNERHOUSE PUBLICATIONS

Manchester

INTRODUCTION

These pictures are not an effort to document, in any real sense, Grapevine Hollow, West Virginia, but rather the collision of my experiences, the tangible world and the nature of photography.

I first photographed Grapevine, West Virginia in 1988. It is such a small town that a resident once said that if you didn't know it was a hollow you would think it was someone's driveway. It was never my intention to stay for a long time in any one place, the general nature of most photographic road trips, yet repeated visits of varying lengths up to several months continued for over five years.

I found myself driven by a desire for repeated interaction with the community and to specific places and events in Grapevine. And also perhaps to an intimacy never before imagined. After all it was a chance set of circumstances which brought me to Grapevine in the first place.

This series of photographs is my journal.

SUSAN LIPPER

New York City, 1993

GRAPEVINE

AMBULANCE

12-PACK
MICHIGAN
WOLVERINE
Rolaids
409

FANNIN
HOMES, INC.
AUGUST
Holy Bible

KOOL
inside
AIR CONDITIONED

Emory

MARINE CORPS

Holy Matrimony
according to the ordinance of God and the
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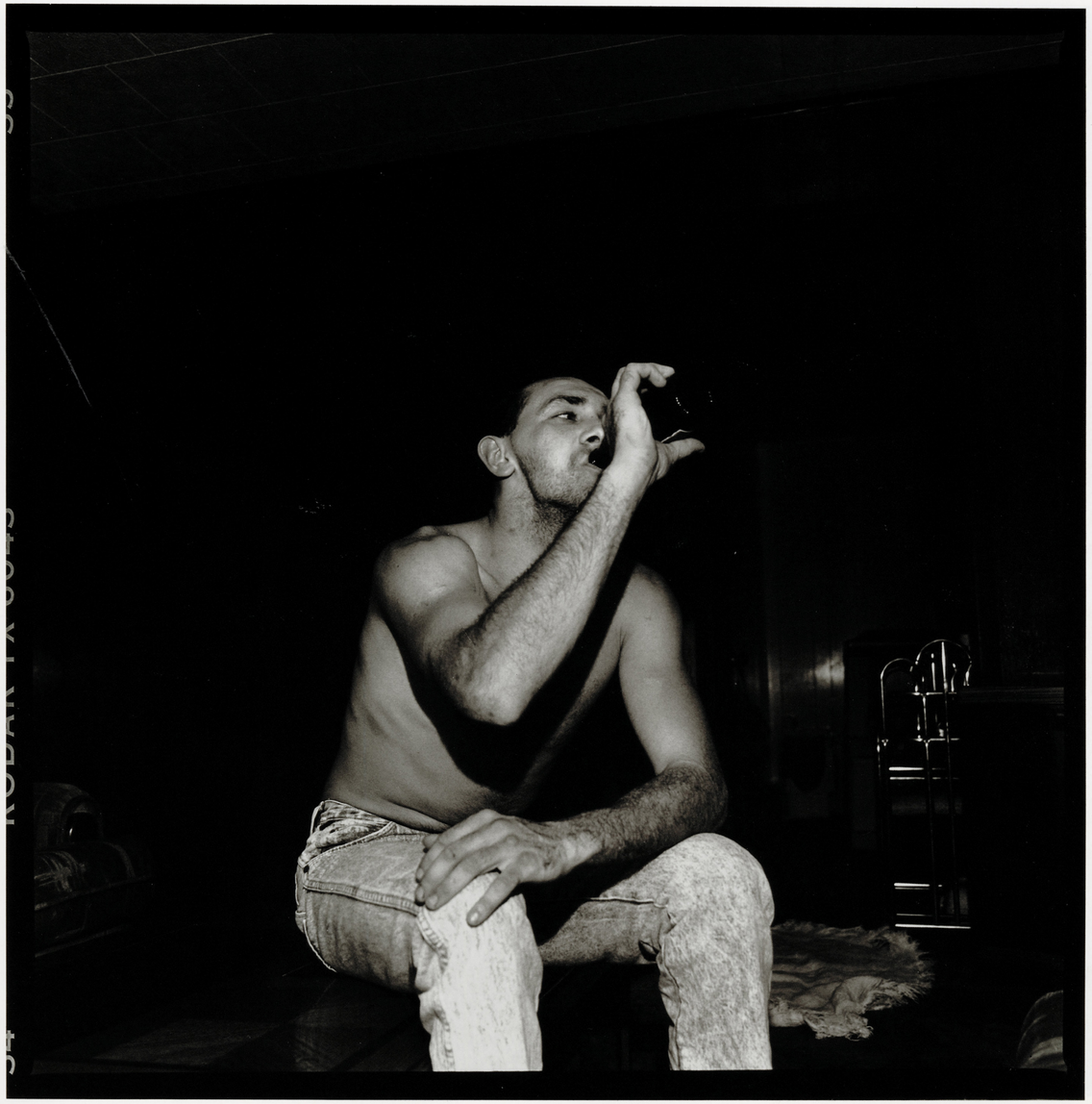
in the year of our Lord 19
So then they
are no more twain
but one flesh...
Witnesses:
COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
CERTIFICATE OF MARRIAGE

CHRISTIAN
KNIGHTS

LORD JESUS



Welcome
Friends

CONVERSATIONS

MOTHER A landlady (sometimes referred to as Sis or Ann).

BOB A neighbor and Mother's brother.

GENE A neighbor and Mother's ex-boyfriend.

SL A photographer and Mother's tenant.

MOTHER ...people say you know that woman who lives up there at Grapevine? Mother? They don't know ma name. And all the people I've been around, but I don't make friends too easy. I don't get close to people, but when I do get close to people I get too close to 'em before I should. Religion is something that's wonderful if you try to keep it right. You can't cuss. You can't drink. You can't do stuff like that. I try to watch what I say when I talk about somebody. You can't talk about them. If you talk bad about 'em, it'd be you're sinning. If you talk bad about your fellow man. And I've had so many people to come and say, "Come on Mother, let's sit down and talk...." The other day Johnny May come up to see me. She preaches in the Church of God, Living God. She says, "I know you have been under conviction for a long time." I set down on the porch and talked to her and that following Sunday is when I told you I was baptized. **SL** Why the Church of the Living God? **MOTHER** 'Cause it was the church that I was raised in. My mommy went to 'em and that's why I always went to 'em. **SL** Tell me about divine healing. Do they have that at your Church? **MOTHER** I know this to be the truth. I had that bad heart attack. I went and I was prayed for several times. And they still pray for me and when I went over there [the hospital] the last time he didn't even put me on medicine.... I believe that God healed me. That's what I believe.

SL Well, it is one-and-a-half hours to the nearest town with a movie theatre. What do you feel about living in such an isolated place as Grapevine? **MOTHER** I wouldn't have it no other way 'cause all this area is home and I don't care about movies no more. But I know there ain't nothing for younguns to do around here without a car. **SL** Why do you think the young people don't leave? **MOTHER** They got a hankering for this place 'cause everybody knows everybody and they never meet no strangers.

BOB No, I ain't got a thing against these boys drinkin', smokin' their dope, what have you. But the only thing that I do have against... these boys they'll gather down here at night. **MOTHER** Their talk.... **BOB** My sister, seventy-some years old, they get out here shootin' guns, cussin' and braggarding and all right there in public. That's no place for that. Let 'em take it up one of these hollers. Then if they want to kick each others' ass and stomp each other, pour to it but don't bring it down here and shove it over our elders or our children.

They pulled out there in the bottom, in a truck, right next to the fence, they get out with a fifth of liquor all of them and set it up on the hood of the truck, "F" this, and "F" that, and our little old girls runnin' around and my daughter sitting beside me on the steps and all.

MOTHER You know I own all this land and they begin to bring the trash, the garbage, and dump it in here and when Bob come back here he said, "Sis, can I come clean it up?" I said, "Go ahead and clean it up. I don't care." I said, "I'm tired of it

too — hollering and keeping me awake shooting and everything." Now that's the truth. No, I just started to tell you — I seen... If it hadn't have been for Pam's daddy, my son Shane would have killed Lisa's old man, Teddy, right there and you know what it was over — running into his fence.

Did you know they went out in my house before dark last night and stood out there and talked in the road 'til almost eleven o'clock. **BOB** Who did? **MOTHER** Pete and 'em... and they worked old T. J. over, the state police did. But they said he worked that other man over, too. **BOB** I heard he hit a cop down there. **MOTHER** He did. He hit a cop. **BOB** Blevins wasn't it? **MOTHER** I don't know. And then he hit that boy they said he just... Tiny told me he liked to killed him with his fist. Said the blood just squirted when that boy fell. **BOB** You know what it all started over don't yuh? **MOTHER** Pete's truck. **BOB** Pulling damned trucks.

MOTHER You wouldn't believe we could start back t'our childhood. You could write two, three books on it. I don't like to talk about it too much.... **BOB** People doesn't really know what our lives were like. They really don't. I remember Daddy making home brew and all and bootleggin' it and now pay attention to this. I mean closely. 'Cause I'm not lying to you about it. **MOTHER** No. **BOB** And we got on starvation. It was one potato in the house. And my dad looked at my mom and said, "Babe, go get me the hatchet," a small hand hatchet, and he said, "I just happened to think of something," and he walked back at the old beaverboard on the wall... he'd been dropping silver dollars in that hole and forgot it. He cut the bottom of that out. And they rolled out on the floor and there was one hundred and eighty-some silver dollars. And awfulist loads of groceries you ever seen, they brung to the house and all.

Mommy had a big barrel of home brew behind the heatin' stove where's it's cold at winter, you got to keep it warm in order to work it off and somebody called the revenuers and here they come, and Mommy grabbed that barrel of home brew and just dumped it right out on the floor and jumped in it with a mop and went to mopping. **MOTHER** And I remember they come in our door one day, and Daddy had a gallon of liquor sittin' there in a hole in the the floor 'cause that was what he was makin' our living with and Mommy when she seen the state police coming in the gate she stuck that and set it down in the slop bucket and poured slop on it and started like she was going to feed the hogs.... **BOB** And you know something? That day she turned the barrel of home brew over, she jumped right in the middle of it with a mop, the revenuers come to the door and said, "You might as well forget it," says,

"this woman's sterilizing her floor with this." (laughter) I seen 'em go down the road with a gallon of moonshine and the revenuers pulled us over and Mommy took the gallon of moonshine and pulled her dress up and stuck it right up her dress between her legs and just set in the seat. They lookin' under the seats and everything. Mommy had it right up her dress.

BOB Uh, we's telling you facts, though, we was raised rough in this country and to beat it all... **MOTHER** We wouldn't trade this country for no country. **BOB** To beat it all, there's one thing about our country. Here in these mountains, we know how to survive we know how to treat people, we know how to be around people. We know how to talk to people. We don't back up on people, we like you we like you, but if you try to shit one of us your ass is grass. It's that simple.

MOTHER But you can live better in the mountains than you can anywhere. **BOB** Well really. Even when the snow is flying, I know what hollers to go to turn in out of the way to dig to get the herbs out of the ground and everything else. I know how to doctor myself if I am wounded in the mountains. All of this. I was raised to it. **MOTHER** Bob's education didn't come from books. That's why you can talk about survival. People that know survival, and you know I'm seventy-three years old almost, and I could tell you a lot... but I don't never talk about it hardly.

Daddy, Mommy whipped me.... "You got to stay here and take care of these younguns." That was Bob, and Frank and Cump. Still taking care of them and I look at them just like they is little old boys right to this day. When one of them get sick I'm there but I would like to see 'em make a life for their own selves. Bob wants women and Cump wants women, and I guess Frank's got one he'll keep. See Frank's forty-six years old or fifty-six — I forget which it is. But he has had quite a few women. And Bob done been married four times! Been everywhere, mean, I think he's mellowed a little bit in the older days though.

BOB See I didn't come up like the rest of them. **MOTHER** Bob had it a little easier than I did. **BOB** Bob had it a little easier — when Bob turned eighteen, Bob hit the highways hitchhiking — all over the United States of America. Seriously I did — I hitched, I traveled over America. I couldn't read. When I done it there was no such thing as a four-lane high- way. The most newest, most modern highway that there was in America was Route 66. **SL** What year were you born, Bob? **BOB** Huh... Nineteen and Forty. **SL** You were on the road in Nineteen Fifty-eight. Tell us some of the stories about you and your older brother Frank?

j o l e n e & b o b

BOB Frank he got in this phone booth and stayed drunk in it where he was a wino. I called it Times Square because it was built something similar to a gazebo. And he slept in this and I would bring grub by and all where these women would buy it for me and throw it out to Frank in that phone booth and feed him. We went down to a bar and took up donation to get him a pair of shoes. We got about twelve dollars, and he went down there and he bought it all in wine. I'm serious he bought it all in wine. And he stayed drunk there for a week in that phone booth. And I told him, I said, "Frank, you're going to have to have shoes. Come on I'll buy you a pair." And do you know how I bought his shoes? I took him to a big shoe store and I told him, "Now you go in there and you tell that man you want a pair of shoes. And you get on a pair that fits you real good and you just nod your head up and down. When I come on through that door raising hell, you jump up and run." Frank sat down and got on a pair of shoes that felt real good on him. I come on through that I said, "Where's that son of a bitch at? I'm gonna to kill him." And Frank jumped up and hit that door and I run him right out of that store with them new shoes on. Seriously. Hey that's the only way we had of getting him a pair of shoes. He can't hardly walk barefoot....

Oh yeah. When I rode the rails, I used to wear a pair of coveralls and everything over my clothes. I never will forget the time I come into Saint Joe, Missouri, rolled off a that train, honey, and I pulled them damn pair of coveralls off, and I'm spic-and-span clean, put my dirty coveralls and all in my bag, and walked over to this wino setting beside this restaurant. And I said, "Buddy, are you hungry?" He said, "Yah I am." I said, "Come on, I'll buy you anything you want to eat." Took him into that damn restaurant and didn't have a damn nickel. Didn't have one nickel. Told him I said, "Order up what you want." He ordered him up a big dinner and I had two quick hot dogs and cup of coffee. I said, "You just sit right there and shake your hand like this up in the air so they will know who I'm paying for it for." I went back to the cash register and said, "See that guy down there moving his hand, he's going to pick up the check." And out the door I went. I guess they're still beatin' on that wino (laughter). I had to eat but I was smart enough to get it.

MOTHER You know when he and Frank left the first time, when they come home, they had walked 'til their feet was sore. **BOB** Blood running out of 'em. **MOTHER** That's when they picked apples for Senator Byrd. It was forty years before he was in office or anything. **BOB** He owned this big orchard in Martinsburg. We got ten cents a box for pickin' 'em. And we stayed in a big camp like for prisoners and bees, had big honeycombs built in the walls and all. And we ate there, picked fruit and everything for survival and make a few dollars.

MOTHER When my husband Dewey come up here, I think that wages was just about a dollar a day. When he come to West Virginia... state was just a buildin' up... you know all the poverty. And he'd picked cotton. And me and Dewey met.

We got married and went back to North Carolina. I picked cotton for a while and worked in a cotton mill. I didn't like it, I said, "I'm going home Dewey. If you want to go, you can go." But he come on back with me, and when he got up here he said, "I'll never pick cotton no more." And he never did. **BOB** He went into the coal mines here.... **MOTHER** And made a good living.

BOB Let's just show you something... if you really want to see, right today they are destroying the unions in West Virginia, but if they had ever seen these childrens and the bloody battles that's been fought in this state to organize this union. Little children with their heads stuck out of damn teepees set up and all, out of canvas, doing without food and all, if you want to learn something you just move down the road here just about a hundred miles or so towards Williamston [Williamson] and you'll learn it. **SL** Are you talking about when they put the miners out of their homes and they had to live in camps? **BOB** Absolutely. Baldwin thugs and everything. **MOTHER** They made my daddy drive 'em into... uh. **BOB** They kicked my mommy's ass out of the car, a T-Model Ford, and he had a bunch of Baldwin thugs that was amakin' him go to fight the union and they was going to Blair Mountain honey, he was goin' and dump everyone of 'ems' ass out over that mountain in that car.

SL Sid Hatfield was shot up here in Welch, that was before your time, Bob. You don't remember hearing about it? **BOB** Most definitely. **SL** So is that why you married a Hatfield? **MOTHER** Honey, my grandma was a McCoy. **SL** I know but you married a Hatfield, Bob. Weren't those meant to be feuding families? **BOB** Damn right. And you know something? The Hatfields and the McCoys was joined there again through me and my wife. And do you know something, I am going to tell you something else too. Daddy come to West Virginia in Nineteen and Nine. **MOTHER** Nineteen Hundred. **BOB** Mommy come out of Kentucky. Mommy was borned in Nineteen Hundred. Daddy come here in Nineteen and Nine.

Mommy had a boyfriend by the name of Jack Griffey right up here at the mouth of Hurricane Branch. Mommy was in a swing and Jack Griffey was pushing her and all and Dad come by and seen her and said "I'm goin' to marry that girl" and went over and broke Jack Griffey's arm. Mommy took down with fever and everything, and pneumonia and all, and when Mommy come to, Daddy was a setting by her bed in her house. **SL** You told me her name was Babe. **BOB** Her name was Mary Ellen Myers and went by the nickname of Babe.

SL Do you think a woman has a right to an opinion? **BOB** Yes I do. Yes I do. Matter of fact, I think the woman has just as much right as the man. The only thing that I don't think that the woman should try to do, is to rule over the man for the simple reason, he was created first and she was took from his rib and you know somethin'? That's right in our Bible. I think that a woman if

she wants to be individually and be compared to the man that she should never marry, she should never marry she should step out on her own and do things on her own and then she's classified as an individually woman. **MOTHER** (laughter) **BOB** I am going to tell you one thing, when you go into a bedroom, they wasn't just one in there. It took two seeds to make the one. And let them two pay for it.

SL I want to hear about your mother being a midwife. **BOB** Now let me tell you a little story about her being a midwife. She caught all of Blake Roberts' kids back on Garland Mountain on just a horse path going back there, no road. **SL** You're saying she "caught"? **BOB** She caught the baby and birthed it. **MOTHER** Delivered it. **BOB** That's what we call delivering a baby. She caught the baby. And what else would you say when you have your hands on a baby and it comes out of a hole? You would catch it.... Right or wrong? **MOTHER** Cut the cord and tie it, push it back and... **BOB** Take that cord and tie that navel cord off and all before it's clipped and all. Take the afterbirth and everything else. Yah see I know this stuff. I watched my mother birth babies. **MOTHER** I have too. **BOB** I was a country kid. You know the saddest time of my life was when we went to catch one one time and it was born dead and I put it in my arms for my mother and carried off of this mountain down this path to take it to the funeral home. **SL** How old were you? **BOB** I was roughly eleven years old.

BOB Do you know something? I'm going to tell you something that happened to me and her and Frank and her husband Dewey and all. Long time ago there was a holiday come around. It was Thanksgiving. **MOTHER** Nobody, no money. **BOB** And you know something? We didn't have no money or nothin'. Anyway we scrounged around and we got a small... what was that? ...A small ham or a small turkey or something. **MOTHER** No... each pitched in and took their pennies or nickels. And we bought a little tiny ham and a little chicken. I stuffed the chicken and fixed the ham. **BOB** We fixed a Thanksgiving dinner and they was plenty food left... and that was the best Thanksgiving dinner that we ever had in our life and it was the most poorest and it was the most smallest but the most best. We had each other. And honey, I believe that that Thanksgiving marked every Thanksgiving because we united as a family, and we was all grateful to be with one another and to have this. And do you know something? Everybody eats their fill and we know that God blest us and there's food left wasn't they, Sis? **MOTHER** Yeah. It's the truth. **BOB** It is.

MOTHER I am going to tell you about our family. Did you know that's why we all have been Democrats. Ain't we Bob? 'Cause Hoover liked to starve West Virginia people to death. Took everything away from us. **BOB** We got out and picked greens. All kinds of different weeds. That's why we can survive in these mountains. We got out and picked greens and everything else.... For to survive, I mean to live.... Let me show you why these people come together. I am going to show you why. Is on account of we took

a sow

a meat skin, a piece of sow belly. These people in this country would loan each other that piece of meat skin to grease their pans to cook greens with and everything in. Our mother practically froze to death going to get a little five-pound bag of flour to try to feed the kids. And you know some- thing... **MOTHER** Red Cross Flour... had a big red cross on it. **BOB** You think we don't know what rough is? We know. **MOTHER** Oh Lord, we lived in the valley of the riches after that.

BOB So you see we had an inheritage. We had an inheritage. But most of all, I'll remind you this. We had each other and I will learn you something about our people, me and her, me and Cump. Every one of us we'll get in a fight between us and so I'll be damned if we don't fight each other to kill, but so help me if some damn stranger even comes over and looks in, we got ourselves a war. Uh-uh. No, honey, don't get involved in that. Me and my brothers be out there in that yard fightin'. You damn well don't want to get in it. For you, I'll guarantee you'll have them all on you.... So you see we're closer than people think. What we do, we do to each other. **MOTHER** We've never done nothing to ever hurt nobody. **BOB** But you know something? We love each other. One of us does something to the other'un you watch it walk off and sit down and cry and come back and say it's sorry.

SL Would you say Grapevine is a mean place? **BOB** Used ta be. Now I don't know. **MOTHER** It just some mean people... it's never been mean place. **BOB** You know now why it's not mean now? It was guys just like me that calmed it. Such as — hey they jumped on my sister there. And she had a tea cup and she wore it out over these woman's head... had nothing but the ring left. But when I got done my goddamn pump shot gun — honey the battle was over. I shot the man right in his damn face and left him rolling back in the damn floor. **SL** You killed him? **BOB** You damned right! **MOTHER** No, the bullet just sent wood splinters into his face. We always been a family that stuck together. **BOB** Guys like me is what calmed the West down here. You know something? I even cut 'em through the church doors. There are nine of 'em a teaming up and beatin' me. My dad sharpened both of my knives and when I laid into the nine of them, at Garland, I cut 'em and everything else. Preacher's pulling me off the top of them in the middle of the church house. I calmed the West. And today, nobody shits with me.

Yeah. That's why I'm the mayor around here. I come into this bottom like I said. They had done took it over, done everything they wanted to it. You think I just cleaned this end down here? Go back up through Michael's and all, look around

Pete's place and all. I said, "You'll clean it all up." Why? I'm a damn Indian. You don't come in and cut down the forest and burn it in front of me. Go out and pick up the dead twigs and build a fire. I leave something for my children.

MOTHER Teddy he allowed any kind of drunk to go in there. **BOB** Pot-so's [pot heads] and all. **SL** So you guys got Teddy to clean up his yard. **BOB** I'm the man that put Teddy to cleanin' up his yard. You got to stand up to people. **MOTHER** If you don't they'll run over you. **SL** But what do you think about these people carrying guns around here now? **BOB** I think they're a bunch of cowards.

MOTHER No they wasn't but just two, two or three boys these younguns that come on here and started trouble around here. This is a quiet place. **SL** But what about your neighbor Gene losing his eye in a poker game? **BOB** Yeah. What about that? **MOTHER** He caused every bit of it. **BOB** He brung it on himself. **SL** If everyone didn't carry guns it wouldn't have happened. **BOB** No, the man didn't carry a gun. The man walked into his bedroom and got a gun. He was at the man's house. **MOTHER** My God, trailer set where that one is (pointing). **BOB** The man said he was cheatin' him in a poker game. He come in and shot the shit out of him.

next day **MOTHER** Dena come up from Mile Branch and she was half drunk when she got up here and she fooled around up Gene's and she tried to whip him to start with.... **GENE** She did not! She wanted on the bed, man! **MOTHER** And when I went up there she was in his bed and had her hand up and under her head like this — naked as she could be, and Gene's britches was lying in the floor. And she come in there. She said something smart to me. I said, "You'd better shut your mouth or you going to get hurt honey." And about that time ole Gene's sittin' there and sure 'nuff — POW! Greazed his nose as the bullet went across and she lay down and I took my pistol and walked over to her and put it right there honey and pushed it hard, and said, "Now you open your mouth and I'll blow your head off." And honey I would have done it. And I told her, I said, "You'd better get out of here. If I live, I'm going to tell your man on you." Next morning I got up and I went down and I said, "John, if you want to know where your wife was, she been up there in the bed with Gene." He come up and beat the fire out of you.

teddy's house

GENE You shot at me and also you stuck a damn barrel down her throat. She said, "Go ahead and pull the trigger!" **MOTHER** No, she was layin' there drunk and I said, "I will blow your head off honey." And I did... I got your nose right off that way didn't I? **GENE** No you did not. **MOTHER** Yes I did too.... **GENE** The bullet went through the goddamn top of the trailer. **MOTHER** And he was sittin' like this and it greazed his nose. **GENE** It did not. **MOTHER** It did now.

Lord there'd been few things happen we've had sit back and laugh about it. **GENE** That's not the only time it happened. Three times. **MOTHER** Four of 'em. **GENE** Three times. Three Forks Mountain, top of... a thirty-eight and the damn bullet wouldn't go off. **MOTHER** I did try to shoot you. (laughter) **GENE** And come up once there before and shot, right here. Remember them two holes through the door? Shot right between my legs. Probably trying to cut it off. (laughing) **MOTHER** Oh god.... Yeah you think I was easygoing like I am now. I used to be mean. (laughs) **GENE** Well I reckon honey. Used to whup the shit out of me.

SL Is she the only woman that ever shot at you, Gene? **GENE** Yeah. Yeah. I'm not lying. She crazy buddy. A woman. You said, "A woman." Now that man shot me right out here where Blossie lives at now. **MOTHER** Shot Raymond Rowe, too, over a card game. **GENE** It wasn't nothing Ann. He just got sure of his money. **MOTHER** Well it was you'un that was playing and they shot Raymond in the shoulder... when they got to Gene his eye was running out on us.

GENE You know why? I heard about that. **MOTHER** What? **GENE** He used to go with you Ann. **MOTHER** Who? **GENE** Old Gary Brown. **MOTHER** No, Gary Brown never did. He sure never did. I rented to him. But him and Raymond were going to take him for his money. **GENE** No, we was not going to take him for his damn money. When you play poker... ever who wins, wins, man.... You don't have to cheat to play poker, Ann.

SL So Gene, tell me about the knife fight that was at your house between those two guys up the hollow when you got cut. **GENE** One of 'em tried to jump on me, pull a knife on me and... **SL** What was the fight about? And when was it? **GENE** That's about three years ago, and I called him a pussy. He couldn't stay in the army for six months and got a disability when he got out. What are you goin' to do? Tape all that shit and put it onto the Federal Government?

SL What are Mother's dogs' names? **GENE** Peanut and Nigger.... I had one, I had one... boy he is pretty now. Runt I named him Runt. I went to the

gene at poker

post office one morning in the car, okay? And I happened to look over at Hassel Powell's house and there he laid — dead — throat cut. Dog done it. You know, like a dog start yippin', okay. And he wasn't big enough to do anything. Mommy... I got a picture up there of my mommy holding it. Oh — when she died — I lost my world, man.... It's pitiful man. I mean last Christmas I went to two funerals. I took that black suit I had that's how mad I was, and I stripped it in threads.

MOTHER I've had three "Niggers." Gene gave me the first one, and I've called every one of 'em "Nigger." And they are all related? Named 'em "Nigger" 'cause they're black. **SL** What kind of dogs are they? **MOTHER** Chihuahuas.

the day after **MOTHER** Well I've always kept clean house. You know I bought this bottom after Dewey died. **BOB** Gave pennies and everything. **MOTHER** About fifteen, twenty dollars a month 'til I achieved it, and no, I don't even have homestead. And I don't even have to pay taxes on it. **SL** So tell me how do you take care of your bills? **MOTHER** Well, I put take my check I don't get much — about seven hundred, eight hundred dollars a month. I put it in a bank and I sort out all the bills and if it's a big bill and I can't pay it all. I pay some of it. I try to keep my bills up. I don't have no collectors come knocking on my door 'cause I can't stand that. But I pay my hospital bills. I still have three hospital bills, one was sixty-five dollars, one was thirty-some and the other was about twenty-one.

Now, what do you want to know about church? The church that I go to is called The Church of the Living God. First thing that you do when you go in, you pray. You shake hands and then you pray. Then the preacher preaches and [he says] if you feel like shouting — shout. If you don't, you sit still and when the church is over, you dismiss yourself and go home. Church is a wonderful thing. **SL** Is that of the holiness religion? Do you speak in tongues? **MOTHER** No, there is what you call the Holiness Church. Oh all of it is holy, you have to be holy to be in it. Yeah, if you got the faith that you can speak in, got enough of God about you, you can. I don't. I stammer. When the spirit of God gets on me I just stammer. (noise) SSSS (noise) SSSS. Something like that. Blossie she speaks in tongue. You see it works different, the church has all got a different attitude about us. And there are some good people in all of us.

SL Well, what do you think about the snake church then? **MOTHER** Well I'll just tell you I'd run them off.... Well I'll tell you one thing I won't want no part of 'em. Honey they've had men to get killed down here with 'em. We know the man, one man that got killed down there, a rattler got him. **SL** You don't think it's real religion that they're practicing? Don't some of your family go there? **MOTHER** Well I think when you're worshipping snakes you're worshipping the devil. I really do.

SL Do you think any-

body's gotten the Holy Ghost in your church? **MOTHER** (nodding) Do you know about the Holy Ghost... when you feel God's presence on your body, when you shake a hand with 'em, and you have cold chills that go over you over the whole body — that's God's presence. The day that I got baptized, it's been a year ago now. I was really bad off. You know when my heart first started to bother me? I said, "Blossie, uh they have a baptizing down here." I said, "I'm going to be baptized today." I said, "You don't know I ain't been praying, 'cause I have." And I had on them ole pair of blue jeans and an old beat-up shirt and other people's dressed. You know how they was dressed.... And off down there I went. And went in that river and I was baptized. And I ain't broke over yet. I hope I never break over. I had a whole lot to contend with but I just asked God to see me through it so I could go on. I know God has made it so I can prosper to a certain extent which I don't want riches. I just like a nice home.

Well now I wouldn't change my life for nothing because a man does expect too much out of a woman.... But it's nice to have a man to help you. But I don't think I want any part of it. For I'm too old now to start. Now if I was about your age I'd say... I believe I'd feel a little bit different. Because I've had quite a few men and I have quite a few men to love me. And I didn't care none about that. But I'm happy with my ways just the way they are, wouldn't change them at all. **SL** What do you mean a man expects too much of a woman? **MOTHER** Cook, wash, to bed with him and everythin' else... that what, that's mostly — sex is all men mostly thinks about. I ran into one of 'em the other day that I used to go around with after Dewey died. I wouldn't talk to him though. He says, "Going to be a pretty day, ain't it?" I just says, "Sure is." Now that was it, down at laeger.

When me and Dewey got into the fight he got out and got drunk, come home. Well he goin' beat up on me. I said, "You ain't gonna touch me." I had a Coca-Cola bottle sitting on my table. I grabbed that Coca-Cola bottle and just knocked him crazy... and the blood just squirted and took him out to the Doctor McKee in Bradshaw. And he said, "Dewey, what's wrong with you?" Dewey said, "I bought me a mule and she kicked me," and he just killed hisself laughin'. We had a good life together though. But he was so insanely jealous of me. That's is about all there ever.... Y'all we had two or three fights... all through our married life, but he was always good to me. He'd draw his payday and bring it and give it to me, take care of me pay the bills. You know he like to get drunk, and he liked to play cards. Other than that, he was a pretty good man.

SL Would you say you had a lot of conversations with him? **MOTHER** Not really. We'd sit down sometimes and talk a little bit about something. But that would be it. I went on about my chores and he worked everyday nine to six, eight or seven to five whatever the shift was. Now he liked women, too.

But that is just about all about my life except when I was having such a hard time 'fore I got married, probably to this day that's why I got married 'cause my parents... **SL** They gave you a tough time, didn't they? You didn't get along with your dad, right? **MOTHER** No. Mommy neither. I tried to kill my daddy one time. I was down over the hills down there at Garland to see Mr. Roberts and Mrs. Roberts and Daddy hollered and said, "Sis, come on to the house." I said, "Daddy, I'm comin'." Instead of me going up the road like I should I went up through the garden. And I pulled an onion blade off an onion we had in the garden. And when I walked in the door, he met me with a switch. And honey he beat me and beat me and beat me and then grabbed me from the hair and pulled a bald spot of hair out, and when he done that I come up with a chair and cold-cocked him. I laid him out, too, honey.

And the next morning we's sittin' at the table and Daddy said, "You've got to go to the store this morning." And I said, "Well," and I put on the best outfit I had and sweater and went down there and bought twenty-some dollars worth of groceries and had Mr. Bishop to send them up. I just kept going never did look back, and when I stopped I was in Pritchard, Idaho. I traveled that much by foot and when I could get a ride. I didn't know where I was goin'. Didn't care. Daddy had the law and everything else. I was moving too fast for him to catch me though. I'd just land me a job at a restaurant or something. I went to work out there in a sawmill camp waiting on tables, making about five dollars a week. But back then you could hitchhike and never... you see what kind of life I've had.

SL Since you've traveled, what do you think about the people around here not liking black people? **MOTHER** Yeah. I really don't know 'cause I seen awful nice... colored people. I don't dislike colored people, but you know, used to they had a sign up over there just before you get into Grundy? On the sign it said, "Darky, don't let the sundown catch you here." They never was allowed in that town. But they go there now. They used to be one or two there in Bradshaw, but they left there. They never was too many colored people in here. Now I've knowed some good colored people. I had an old colored lady that used to live with us at Hampton Roads. And every time she make a pound cake, she'd holler for me to come get a piece of her pound cake, and that was the best stuff I believe I ever eat in my life. That's why I learned to make pound cake. I know she's been dead for years though.

SL And what about Dewey's family in North Carolina? **MOTHER** Yeah, they had 'em. They had 'em to clean their homes and stuff. No, there're plenty of colored people down in there. And Dewey always would rabbit hunt with an

old colored man down there and when Dewey go by hisself and he'd catch a lot of rabbits, he would give them to him. But the McEntyres, I don't understand them. The McEntyres is all funny people. You know where I'll make anybody free to set down at my table and eat... they don't. **SL** Dewey knew a lot of Klan people? Didn't he? **MOTHER** Yeah. They lived right down there close to 'em in Georgia... all of them. I guess back things I didn't know about I guess they fought and everything else.

I've never seen a Ku Klux Klan but one time. We lived on Big Coal River and there was a man named Walter Dilbeck stayed with us and he whipped his woman, May was her name.... They was a staying with us — and I was just a little girl. And the Klan marched in on our yard and they told him after he whipped her, "We don't want after dark to catch you here." And honey he packed his clothes and he got out from there. Yeah. They come to the house and then they laid a big wad of switches on the porch. **SL** So you've seen a whole lot of Klan people then? **MOTHER** Yeah. I've seen quite a few of them.

SL What do you think will be the future of Grapevine, West Virginia? **MOTHER** I think it will prosper and people will be gettin' jobs again. People's been down so long it's time it went up. The place will, it will be the same old place again... plenty of drunks, ornery as ever.

These interviews were recorded during the summer of 1993.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

These photographs could not have been possible without the support of the Grapevine Community and to it I am deeply grateful. I would especially like to express my gratitude to those people whose images and words appear on these pages and, most of all, to give heartfelt thanks to Cynthia Ann McEntyre for her understanding and hospitality. I would also like to thank her daughter, Sherry Addair, for warm acceptance and the initial introduction to Grapevine.

Many people were important in the making of the book. Gerry Badger, Deborah Bell, Richard Benson, Sandy and Francis Fisher, Marc Freidus, Laurent Girard, Joseph Lawton, Joan Pachner and Joanne Revson have been invaluable for their advice.

In particular, I would also like to mention Sandra Gilbert-Freidus and William Straus, who gave not only expert assistance but did so beyond the call of friendship.

Will Stapp has given support for this project long before it reached book form and provided important counsel throughout the bookmaking process, as has Jeff L. Rosenheim, who continually and helpfully challenged my editing process.

Joseph Guglietti in his thoughtful and beautiful design found a means to show the pictures in a clear and enhanced way and gave much more of himself than ever was required.

I am indebted to Niall Allsop of Cornerhouse for the many favors involved in producing a book from across the ocean.

Finally, I would like to give special thanks to Dewi Lewis for imagining that Grapevine could be a book in the first place and for the faith he has placed in this project.